

# Military Construction in the

*Scoring in the Red Zone Requires Teamwork*



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*The “Red Zone” in football is defined as the last 20 yards from the goal line. It’s hard to score in the Red Zone because the defensive team has less area to defend and can concentrate its effort. Likewise, the offensive team has less area in which to maneuver and is limited in its plays. It takes the focused and precise execution of all players doing their assigned task to advance in the Red Zone. Any member who fails to perform his assignment can cause the team to fall short of its goals.*

*Coach Fisher DeBerry, the U.S. Air Force Academy’s head football coach, had this to say about the Falcons operating in the Red Zone: “The team must have a different mindset on how to approach business in the Red Zone. The whole team must become very, very committed and very, very dedicated to be successful. It’s a little tougher and they have got to reach down and reach forth for a little more effort. And they have got to pledge to themselves that they are not going to let each other down and that they are going to do their jobs when it gets down to the most critical part of the field.”*

Why are we talking football terms in an engineering magazine? Like the Red Zone in football, military construction (MILCON) projects reach a point near the last 20 percent of construction when work slows and becomes more difficult. Typically, getting to within 60 days of beneficial occupancy of the facility is easy. The tough part starts with the final push to complete the project, get the users moved in, wrap up financial transactions, and close the project out.

Historically, project completion and financial closeout take too long, interrupting the facility users and tying up funds that could be used on other MILCON projects. Coordination with personnel from many organizations and dedicated commitment by all are required to complete the project and financial closeout in a timely manner.

## The Red Zone Meeting

Air Combat Command has developed an innovative Red Zone construction management concept designed to properly complete projects as quickly as possible. The key to the concept is the Red Zone meeting.

The goal of the Red Zone meeting is to build a schedule of events necessary to achieve project completion and closeout within 120 days of beneficial occupancy. The meeting is typically held 60 days before anticipated beneficial occupancy. Everyone involved meets to develop a plan and schedule to complete the project.

The meeting must achieve three objectives. First, representatives from the organizations responsible for specific jobs must attend. Second, attendees must be able to identify the tasks necessary to complete their portion of the remaining work. Third, each must be able to commit to finishing their organization’s task by the scheduled date.

## Key Participants

Key participants at the Red Zone meeting include the program manager, financial manager, resident engineer, contracting officer, architect-engineer of record, and representatives from the base fire department technical services section, communications squadron, using agency, and civil engineer operations and engineering flights. Others involved in the project should also attend.

The program manager chairs the Red Zone meeting and guides the discussion in two main areas — construction and financial status. The group discusses project

elements and reaches a consensus on remaining work and the funding required. Participants build a schedule for completing each task and assign responsibility for actions to reach financial completion. The program manager records the key project milestones, which are copied and distributed to each member by the end of the meeting.

## Key Milestones

Based on past experience, ACC has developed a list of key project completion milestones that should be discussed and scheduled during the Red Zone meeting. The list was developed for a typical MILCON project, so not all milestones on the list may apply to your project. Likewise, there may be other key milestones not on the list that should be added. Those organizations responsible for completing a milestone should be able to commit to a date that does not conflict with or delay other key milestones.

### Key project completion milestones are:

- HVAC system test and balance
- Installation of communications equipment to serve phones and computers
- Completion of landscaping
- Preparation of lock and key plan
- Delivery and installation of furniture
- Fire and safety inspections
- Pre-final and final project inspections
- Completion of punch list
- Beneficial occupancy date
- Delivery and installation of equipment
- Delivery of operations and maintenance training manuals
- O&M training of maintenance personnel
- Delivery of as-built drawings
- User move-in
- Ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Physical completion
- Final invoice submission and payment
- DD form 1354 signature
- Release of claims
- Final supervision, inspection and overhead billing
- Return of unobligated funds
- Financial completion and closeout
- Focus on what counts: attitude, direction and teamwork

## Attitude, Direction and Teamwork

The Red Zone concept grew out of ACC's emphasis on finding new ways to improve its construction programs. Our goal is still to deliver quality facilities on time and within budget, just like all major commands. We're using the Red Zone concept to focus on doing even better in meeting that goal.

This renewed focus has three very important components benchmarked from Brig Gen Pat Burns', the ACC Civil Engineer's, personal focus areas — attitude, direc-

tion and teamwork.

First, Red Zone is about a change in *attitude*. The contractor, the Air Force, our construction agent, and the user need to crank up and refocus during the last 120 days of construction. Second, Red Zone is about *direction*. We all need to remember where we're headed. It's about finishing the project right, now that we're this close. And finally, Red Zone is about *teamwork*. No matter how hard any one of us may want to do great to finish the project, it takes the whole team to get there.

Every person on the construction team — the contractor, the user, the project manager, the agent, and the base-level manager — has a critical role to play in the successful completion of the project. It takes that attitude change, a clear direction as to where we're headed, and a committed team effort to succeed in great tasks.

Coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Football isn't about what great individuals did ... football is about great teamwork that did what other teams couldn't do." That's where we're headed with the Red Zone concept, and we want all our construction partners to be a part of our team.

## USACE Signs On

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently endorsed ACC's Red Zone meeting initiative as an approach for timely completion and closeout of MILCON projects. Engineering and Construction Bulletin Number 2002-14, Subject: MILCON Project Closeout, The RED ZONE Meeting, dated May 22, 2002, implements the Red Zone meeting for all MILCON projects managed by the Corps of Engineers.

Maj Gen Carl A. Strock, USACE's Director of Military Programs, calls the Red Zone meeting an important "execution charrette." We have a design charrette to plan the project, and now we get the team together to plan completion of the project.

## Embrace the Concept

Our experience has been that participants in Red Zone meetings have strongly embraced this management concept. Not only have the meetings resulted in a clear assessment of what work remains to be done and a plan for completing those actions in a timely manner, but also in a renewed partnership and strong commitment to work together as a team. The Red Zone concept is proving to be an effective way to foster teamwork and synergy to "carry the ball across the goal line," and deliver quality facilities to our customers.

If you would like a copy of a video that explains the Red Zone concept, call the author at commercial (757) 764-3108, or DSN 574-3108.

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